



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

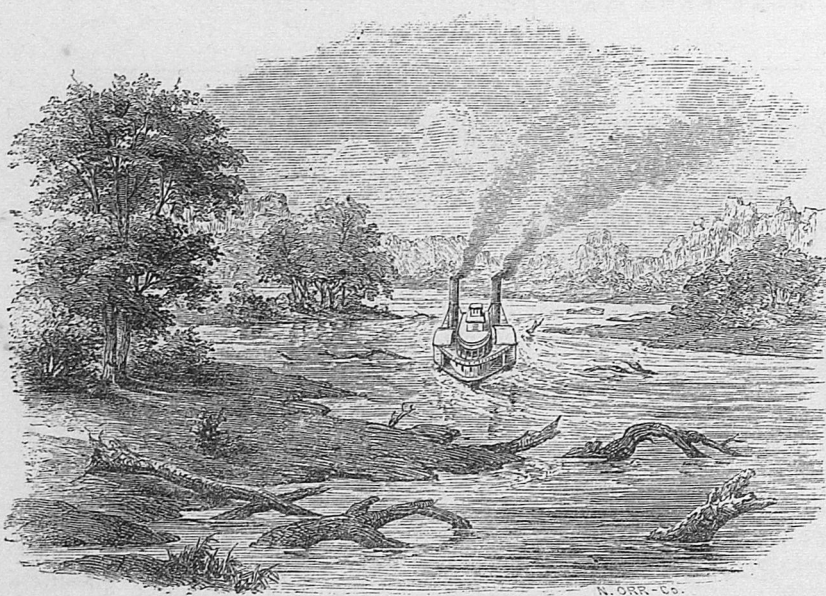
This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

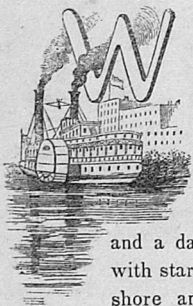
JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



STEAMING UP THE MISSOURI

At Low Water.

OR, "ASTREA IN SEARCH OF THE NEW ATLANTIS"



WHEN we departed St. Louis at four P. M., we hoped to see the confluence of the two mighty rivers by the red rays of sunset; but the last blush of day had faded out, and a dark night, thickly set with stars, had descended over shore and stream before we abthed the prow of our gallant Arabia in the waters of the Missouri. At the watched-for word we hurried on deck, to strive if by peering through the darkness we could discern the union of the turbulent river surnamed the "Mad," with the "Father of Waters," whose clear depths are here discolored for evermore by its great tributary. Nothing, however, was discernible, but the glimmer of a sea-like expanse, bounded by level, wooded shores, and parted in the midst by an island.

We confess we listened for a murmur above the flutter of damp spring wind; but all was silent as a great thought or a strong emotion; the two mightiest rivers on the continent mingled in majestic silence, rebuking the expectation that looked for them to babble; and as the Arabia glided into night-

harbor we retired to our cabin, ourselves as silent, and speculating upon how old one might become without having exhausted the subjects for admiration in nature, provided we never admired the same thing twice, and were constantly employed in search for new emotions. If any reader thinks he can estimate it, let him send us his calculations.

To the timid traveler, the practice, often imperatively necessary on this river, of lying by over night, is very comforting. No visions of disaster haunt his dreaming brain, no hideous noises of machinery grate upon his slumbering ear—even we felt conscious of a sensation of relief at not having snags and sandbars to dream about; and went to our repose this first night of our voyage up the Missouri, with a mind free from any shadow of anxiety. The morning found us on our "winding way" toward Kansas and Nebraska, passing between shores heavily timbered with cottonwood, which, when divested of foliage, has a dead and dreary look, owing to the whitish color of the branches. Slowly and cautiously we crept or glided along in the uncertain channel, sounding at every revolution of the wheel—a procedure so new to us, who were used to the clear, deep currents of our northern rivers, that the novelty afforded us quite a pleasant excitement, and made an hour in the pilot-house an agreeable incident. With a hand and a foot on the wheel, and his accustomed eye studying the color and motion of the water, stood our tall, good-looking pilot,

who, as far as human knowledge could extend, had the lives of hundreds of his fellow-creatures in his hands. A serious care we thought it, as we saw the ceaseless watchfulness which it required.

"T-e-n f-e-e-t!" sings out the man with the lead on one side—and the sonorous song is repeated by the captain on deck.

E-i-g-h-t and a h-a-l-f!" comes up from the other side in a hoarse, half-musical, long-drawn bass. The song is again repeated on deck, in a lighter key, and our good pilot moves his wheel a trifle, and keeps on his course.

"F-o-u-r f-e-e-t!" cries the man of the lead, and quickly a hand on the engineer's bell gives the signal, and our boat walks the water with a cautious tread.

"T-h-r-e-e f-e-e-t, s-c-a-n-t!" immediately after,—and the Arabia comes to a stand still, while our pilot scrutinizes the appearance of the curious river he is trying to navigate—rings the bell again—gets the boat backed—starts on a new tack, and has the satisfaction of getting aground—slightly. Again the bells jingle—the engine backs—we start afresh, and hear from the lower deck, "six feet," "eight and a half," "ten feet," "quarter less twain." Our course seems clear, and for fifteen minutes we are in good sailing depth: then comes the "five feet, scant" again, and in a moment more we are fast aground—or *a-log*, for it is on a log that we are sticking this time. "This river," says the Colonel, who has come up behind us, "reminds me of a story about my friend J., who, coming home one night rather late from a party, found himself considerably bewildered as to the locality of the pantry, which he was anxious to find, lest his wife should discover, what he was partly conscious of—that he was 'mellow.' After stumbling about for sometime, J. called out from the bottom of the stairs 'Wifey, where is the milk?' After getting a precise description of the whereabouts of the milk-pan, he made another attempt to find it, but failing as before, returned again to the neighborhood of his wife's door, with the same inquiry in a more supplicating tone: 'Wifey, where is the milk?' Again he was directed how to find the cooling beverage, and again failed in the attempt, but with the added vexation of knocking down the china cups, and breaking them in fragments. The third time poor J. crept to the bottom of the stairs, and whined out, 'Wifey, I say, dear, is that milk tied up in anything or lying about loose?'"

Of course we laughed at the story and the similitude; for nothing ever "laid about" more "loose" than the Missouri river, which has a bed as wide as the Hudson at Newburgh, with a *reserve*, as we should call it, of a mile on one or both sides, where it overflows in high water; yet it now wandered about in among sand-bars and holes, as if it were at a loss which way to flow, or whether to flow at all, and not be lost among the sand.

Yet our good pilot found a channel for his boat; and, satisfied that all was right again, we descended to the cabin to vary our amusements by conjecturing the probable histories of our fellow-passengers—a traveling entertainment to which we are very much addicted—Maznier's opinion of the American capacity for pleasure to the contrary notwithstanding. Our deductions, however, if seemingly logical, were not always correct, as we are about to show, since a certain Kentuckian, who had been singled out by his forlorn air, and pertinacious staring at the ladies, as some unhappy bachelor whom an early disappointment in an affair of the heart had left in a half-crazed condition, turned out to be a widower of property and the father of ten children.

Then, again, there was a couple from California—the gentleman with a strong German accent, and excessively short, who had been, for want of a better title, descriptively dubbed "three feet, scant," by our friend, the Judge—and the lady, evidently American, who agreed with the description of "five feet, large," and who owned a white parrot with a yellow top-knot:—this couple we had declared to be yet enjoying their honeymoon, judging, of course, from the never-tiring attentions lavished upon each other. What was our mortification on hinting our surmises to the lady, to be told that their honeymoon had lasted twenty-six years! We could not believe it, and we would not. It was plain they were hoaxing us; the foreign accent and pronunciation of the little man, often needing the help of his amiable spouse to interpret. How was it possible, that, in a companionship of twenty-six years, he had not learned to use the English so as to speak for himself? We made a mental vow to eschew guessing, and quietly stole out on deck to find something in which we could believe.

There was the same sprawling river, but not the same level shore; the Bluffs in all their magnificence greeted our eager eyes. Huge masses of stratified limestone they were, to which Nature had imparted the

charm of picturesqueness—shaping here and there a castle or a tower, and occasionally a sphinx-like image, that started out from the precipitous face of the rock as if on the point of casting itself into the river; or, as if only holding there until the iron horse should bring, some day or night, a train of westward-bound souls along the thread-like way underneath, when it would launch itself upon the fiery steed with a terrible crash, that should grind it to atoms, and send those Atlantis-seeking souls hither and thither—some to a watery grave in the Missouri, some to a horrible death by pulverization, and sparing others to go about mourning all their days: thus revenging itself upon that Juggernaut of Progress which everywhere violates the sacred presence of Nature. We pictured all this and shuddered, though there was a fascination in the sight of these possible terrors that fixed the gaze and the imagination. Much of pleasing beauty, too, mixed with the grandeur of these bold and rocky heights wherever the elevation was less abrupt, and the hills receded from the river in long wooded slopes, indented with shadowy ravines, through which some spring sent forth a little brawling stream to break the solitude with the sound of rejoicing waters. Here, then, there was nothing to hinder our speculations upon probabilities and possibilities. We could fancy ourselves whom we pleased, and this river and scene what we pleased; even that we were an Indian of a century ago, paddling his canoe up the Mad river in kingly solitude; therefore, we liked our snug corner by the wheel-house, and our free imaginations well; yet they were doomed to be broken in upon. The soft voice of a lady passenger interrupted our reverie with the remark that we were "fond of nature and solitude."

"Yes, solitude and nature are old and intimate friends of ours," we replied.

"They say *solitaires* are misanthropic," suggested our fair friend.

"Not all, we dare assure you; we, who mix little with the world, may have more respect for it than those in whom 'familiarity has bred contempt!'"

"Perhaps so. No doubt either, but hypochondria and misanthropy are diseases, arising from mental or physical causes; yet all intellectual persons have moods of disaffection for the world?"

"Intellect does not necessarily entail this disease; a proper self-treatment will be likely to insure an equilibrium."

"But 'when all the heart-strings like wild horses pull,' and the mind becomes enervated by the struggle—what then?"

"We are no physician for others; but believe we may all master ourselves by the force of a cultivated will—even to the 'heart-strings.'"

"But memory will haunt us, and memory must ever be the same; we cannot banish recollection at will."

"We must 'whistle her off, tho' her jesses are our heart-strings," we replied.

"I envy you your confident self-consciousness; we are not all so safe in the citadel of our own strength;" and our fair companion walked musingly away, leaving us to wonder that one like her should hint at sorrows and misanthropy. Yet, with the proverbial inconsistency of woman, when we met at the card-table in the evening—the card-table, that never-failing amusement to the river-goers—the charming sadness of the former hour was displaced by a still more fascinating gaiety. But for the lesson we had received, we should have been again engaged in guessing, and not have trusted patiently to chance to reveal the mystery we were longing to fathom as we did.

Steaming up the Missouri at low water is a work of time and experience. The five days we had been out had only brought us to Brunswick, on the eastern side of the river, where several passengers took leave; and it was worthy of remark, that of those who went, all were seeking homes, or "prospecting;" all stricken with the occidental longing which draws humanity westward, as surely as the moon affects the tides of ocean. This was the flow; who shall be destined to behold the ebb? We had passed several towns, few of which were visible from the river; and being built among the bluffs, the landings were usually very inconvenient. The river border of Missouri is wild and uninviting. There is an air of "shiftlessness" about the people and the towns which would have crazed Mrs. Stowe's Ophelia, and was in no wise pleasing to ourself. It might have been the country—it might have been the "peculiar institutions" of the people—it was something certainly, though nameless, which gave this dreary aspect to the whole river country.

The Arabia had rung her bell, and we were gazing regretfully after the receding group upon the landing at B., when we no-

ticed our lady friend of yesterday leaning pensively over the guard near us; and resolved to take our fortune at its flood, and quietly fall into conversation, we threw out experimentally that among the party just gone ashore were two young couples just married, both looking for homes.

"Yes, it was of them I was dreaming," answered the lady. "How many hopes, one by one, which they see flowering in the future now, will present them only ashes for fruit!"

"Yet you would not have them cease to hope?" queried we.

"No, we are sustained by this beautiful faith of youth in happiness, through the severest trials; indeed, it must be a blighting frost which chills its lovely bloom; yet the frost must come."

"You speak like a prophet," said we; "are you then so learned in the lore of love, and hope, and sorrow?"

"Wise only through actual knowledge," she replied; "for I have been young, and loved, and dreamed of happiness; and have seen my dream melt away with my youth, and its love."

"Is there, then, no love except of youth—of an age younger than yours—that you speak in this manner?" we asked, secretly wondering what was the meaning of "youth" in our companion's mind.

"I once believed there was a love for all time; but my faith is altered now. Ask me not how, it is a story of the inner life, and not to be told; yet I think you could understand it." She smiled as she said this, with an expression of lovely frankness which robbed her language of any appearance of affectation. "There are times," she continued, "when it seems to me that I have lived a thousand years; when the incidents of my past existence seem so far apart, and dim, and strange, and sorrowful, that I feel bewildered, and cannot calculate time in connection with them; but by their weight upon my spirits, I feel like Salathiel when he looked back to the crucifixion, over the ruins of kingdoms and the lapse of centuries. One great, nameless sorrow, in itself immortal, mingles with my life and my immortality, and blends past and future in one day. At these times, too, I hear a voice which seems to come from the universe, and echo in my soul. It is as if the great heart of humanity throbbled through mine, or as if my heart were in every one's breast."

We had no desire to interrupt, or to change the thread of thought in the singu-

lar mind before us, and therefore kept silent; presently she continued:

"What a difference there is between that external life which is seen, and that inner, and far more intense and interesting life which is unseen! How should we seem could we be viewed only in the body of thought? What a strangely dark and bright being I should be, or you, or any one! All one's holy and sweet impulses, and warm emotions—all one's misgivings, and errors, and temptations, the quick, passionate, hot flashes of the soul in anger or grief or danger; mixed with sorrow and devotion, and penitence and resignation. If each passion and feeling was depicted by a different color, what a motley ghost would be the ghost of our secret thoughts!"

She paused, yet we wished her to talk on, for she was talking well. A faint color suffused her usually pale face, as the consciousness of having said so much, came over her mind; but, with a gay smile she recovered herself, and asked me if I was a "Swedenborgian?"

"Why?" we answered, like a true Yankee.

"You understand his doctrine of spheres?"

"Yes; what do you perceive in mine?"

"I know not what to call it; but something which compels me to talk."

"Yet you have ceased talking when I was most interested. You confess that you have loved; did you ever think what it is which makes love so exquisite?"

"I think it is the pleasure we have in giving and in receiving. If any one should say 'love me *because* I love you,' I believe he must be dissatisfied to have his request strictly complied with. We love to think it is for ourselves, and not for anything we have done, that we are preferred. And in the same way I think an unconfessed passion more perfectly satisfactory than when we have asked or won a return; for, in the first case we have given everything without any expectation of recompense, and the voluntary sacrifice has a kind of religion in it, which makes us holier and better for the time it lasts."

"Yours is a very refined philosophy, we grant you; but how do you think it would suit the Romeos and Juliets of the universe of lovers?"

"Not at all; it is not suited to 'the land of the cypress and myrtle.' It requires a northern breeze, like this which comes down from the snowy tops of the Rocky mountains, to inspire strength for such self-re-

straint as I have seemed to advocate. I thought yesterday it had blown upon you," she said, looking up at me with a sudden smile.

"To be frank, I do not think it has ever blown upon either of us," we answered; and just at that moment a rush of persons to the spot where we were standing, interrupted our conversation—which was never to be resumed.

"A deer! do you see him? He is making for the shore!" and such like exclamations informed us of the cause of the momentary excitement. Nearly every man going to the Territories carries a rifle or a shot-gun. Here was game if they could get it; but though a number of shots were fired, they only skimmed through the water around the frightened creature; and in three minutes, with a succession of beautiful leaps, he had gained the shore, and gone bounding toward the wood with inimitable grace and speed. Wild geese had been seen by thousands on the sand-bars all the way up, yet were not considered worth the shot; but our sportsmen would have been glad to bring in the beautiful animal, which we saw escape with feelings of real pleasure.

The weather was getting colder. By night it had commenced to snow. We were now confined entirely to the cabin; and the faces around us were becoming familiar as the faces of friends. Each departure took away some share of our resources for entertainment; and departure were growing frequent; so that, although the river had risen considerably within two days, and with its rise our speed had increased, we felt anxious to reach some point of interest. Our Kentucky friend had taken leave; the pretty, young mother with the baby that never cried, was near her destination; and the Colonel, whose vocation it was to tell stories, was bound only to Kansas City, from whence he was going up amongst the Indians. In the morning, however, we found ourselves blown against the shore, and held there for two hours after daylight; a treatment we were not much averse to, as the woods looked beautiful in their new coat of snow and ice; and, as the bluffs in their summer verdure could not be seen, we were willing to know how they looked in winter dress. Our boat had broken a wheel, too, on some protruding cotton-wood log, and the time could be profitably passed in repairing the damage below; while we chatted an hour longer with those passengers destined

for Kansas City, near which we were lying.

"Sorry to leave you; but what is to be, will be," said a young Virginian, sagely.

"True," responded the Judge; "and what has been, can never be again."

"Therefore, I think it proper to invite you to drink a glass of 'what-you-will' with me, 'in memoriam,'" rejoined the Colonel, a courtesy which he extended to ourselves, also; and thus, in these pleasantries, passed the morning until the hour of ten, which brought us to Kansas City. A number of passengers took leave of the Arabia, at this point; and we bade adieu, finally, to two or three friends.

The immigrant spirit began to show itself now in earnest. Hitherto we had all been quietly pursuing our course upon the Missouri, taking on or setting off a person or two at the different landings; and making the most of whatever occurred on our rather monotonous passage to furnish amusement for the time. We had studied the river and the bluffs, so like a fine panorama; had tried to remember the windings of the most crooked of streams; had counted sandbars and snags innumerable; had had glimpses of towns, and seen the cabins of settlers along the shore; had seen here and there a little patch of clearing on a slope toward the river, with hills in the background, and a general air of picturesqueness that was actually charming; had had several trifling accidents, and one death—that of a child of a poor family in the steerage; had pursued our pleasures during the days, and slept quietly during the nights; and nothing had broken in upon the monotony till now. But, as we neared the boundary, there was a rush upon deck, and all eyes were bent eagerly upon the silent and uninhabited shore, as if it had been the shore of the marble-girdled Bosphorus. What there was of promise in that solitude and unbroken wilderness did not meet our eye; yet we could but admire the beautiful outline of the country. We could see with the eye of imagination, far down in the future, a succession of stately mansions and tasteful cottages, embellishing those noble heights and emerald slopes; but it was also impossible not to see the intervening log cabins and rude huts of the first settlers. Undoubtedly these new-comers had had their eyelids touched

"With that rare juice, whose magic power it is
To give the rose-hue to those things which truly
Wear the sad livery of ugliness"

The bustle of preparation for departure—the occasional look-out, and the leave-taking of those exchanging letters of introduction, and other courtesies, occupied the day from the time of leaving Kansas to our arrival at Leavenworth, the town of that name below the Fort. The greater part of the Arabia's passengers disembarked at this new city, where a steam mill, a wooden hotel with a flag flaunting gaily from its roof, several stores, and one hundred houses, more or less, had been erected within the last six months. Several houses noticed were of canvas, but most of the buildings were frame, and although of such mushroom growth, looked comfortable. This is the chief point of attraction in Kansas; and when the Fort ceases to be a military post, and is added to the city, it will offer some of the most beautiful situations in the States and Territories. Here, indeed, is fine scenery; parks and groves of Nature's disposing, so after the cultivated tastes of man, that we might fancy ourselves in England and be pardoned the delusion.

There is a curious bend in the Missouri just at the fort, where a rocky wall rises out of the river, and forms a square corner which looks as if it might have been made by quarrying stone from the bank, so perfect a right angle does it form.

It had been our intention to stop at the Fort; but as we had formed a pleasant acquaintance with some gentlemen going to Nebraska, we concluded to keep on with them to our destination. And here, kind reader, we may as well take leave of you; as what was seen at Weston and St. Joseph did not please us much, and as the journey from the latter place to Council Bluffs had to be performed by stage you would not like to follow us; but we propose to meet you again on the top of a bluff in the beautiful territory of Nebraska.

✦ In one of his Lapland letters, Bayard Taylor gives this forcible figure: "It was a wonderful, a fairy world we beheld—too beautiful to be lifeless, but every face we met reminded us the more that this was the chill beauty of Death—of dead Nature. Death was in the sparkling air, in the jeweled trees, in the spotless snow. Take off your mitten, and his hand will grasp yours like a vice; uncover your mouth, and your frozen lips will soon acknowledge his kiss" "It is to be inferred that Bayard did not "indulge" in these kisses."

THE AUTHOR OF "AURORA LEIGH."

ALL that concerns this eminent lady is of interest. In the sketch of her life and works, which appeared in this Journal, we endeavored to inform the reader upon those points of character and circumstance most material in a summary, but from necessity had to omit many personal reminiscences which would have added much to the narrative. We, therefore, give place to an extract from a late letter from Florence, written after the return of the BROWINGS from their visit to England. The letter writer says: "I learned that the Brownings had returned, and were at their old quarters—'Casa Guidi.' When I rang at the door, I learned, with extreme regret, that Mrs. Browning was suffering deep affliction from the loss of a relative. Mr. Browning, however, received me; and, at his suggestion, after a lapse of some weeks, I renewed my visit. Fancy to yourself an old palace drawing-room, hung with faded arms, furnished with black oak, carved furniture, bookcases of the same, carved, one might fancy, by Antony of Trent himself, and weighed down with ancient-looking books, many of them bound in parchment. Cinque Cento pictures, Giottos, with gold backgrounds, look down from the walls, and the whole air of the room is shady, dreamy, and poetic. Just as I was about to sit down I heard a light rustling, and Mr. Browning said, 'Here's Mrs. —, dear,'—pleasant, simple introduction! The long wished for moment had come, and I stood before the poet. She is a small, slight figure, and, as she stood by the side of her well-built husband, looked almost like another style of being—so spiritual, so pale, with her long dark curls, and eyes full, dark, soft and wonderfully expressive, in which the genius of the woman is clearly seen. She talked so kindly, and with such simplicity, that I really loved her; and was astonished to find that I had been with her an hour and a half. To my taste, Mrs. Browning is extremely lovely in appearance, in the tones of her voice, and in an inexpressible gentleness of manner. She spoke of her American friends with much feeling. Her child is a beautiful boy of eight summers, with long, golden curls, and his mother's soft, large eyes; so fresh and unused to other boys, he looks as if he had just dropped from the skies."